

Strong After 50: Starter Guide

Muscle is the closest thing we have to an anti-aging drug. After 50 you lose it faster, unless you train. This is the simple, joint-friendly way to start, from a board-certified doctor of physical therapy.

Why this matters now

From your 50s onward, untrained adults lose roughly 1–2% of muscle and up to 3% of strength per year. That's the difference between carrying your own groceries at 80 and not. The good news is blunt: resistance training reliably rebuilds strength at every age, with studies showing meaningful gains into the 90s. It also protects bone density, balance, blood sugar, and the joints people assume it destroys.

The only four movements you need to start

1 • Squat

Sit-to-stand from a chair, goblet squat as you progress. Builds legs you can trust on stairs.

2 • Hinge

Hip hinge to a light kettlebell or dumbbell deadlift. The pattern that protects your back in real life.

3 • Push

Incline push-up or dumbbell press. Shoulders and arms that still work overhead.

4 • Pull

Band or dumbbell row. Posture, grip, and shoulder health in one movement.

The rules that keep you out of trouble

- **Start two notches easier than your ego wants.** The first two weeks are about showing up, not effort.
- **Leave 2-3 reps in the tank** on every set. Soreness should be mild, gone within 48 hours.
- **Progress one thing at a time:** a little more weight or one more rep, never both in the same week.
- **Stiff is normal, sharp is information.** Achy muscles are fine. Sharp, joint-line, or radiating pain means adjust, and get evaluated if it persists.

Page 2: your first three weeks, laid out. [Keep going →](#)

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Your first three weeks

Three sessions a week, about 25 minutes each, at home or any gym. Do a 5-minute walk and some easy arm/leg swings first.

WEEK	THE WORK	THE POINT
Week 1	2 rounds: 8 chair squats · 8 hinges (no weight) · 8 incline push-ups · 8 band rows. Rest 60–90s between rounds.	Groove the four patterns. Effort $\approx$ 4/10.
Week 2	Same circuit, 3 rounds. Add light weight to squat and hinge if week 1 felt easy.	Volume first, load second.
Week 3	3 rounds of 10. Add a 20–30 second loaded carry (farmer's walk) at the end of each round.	Real-world strength: carrying is living.

After week three

- Keep adding a rep or a small load weekly. When 3×12 feels easy, go heavier and drop back to 8.
- Add balance work: 30 seconds single-leg stance while brushing teeth. Falls are the enemy; strength and balance are the defense.
- Protein matters as much as the training: aim for a palm-sized portion at every meal.

When to get evaluated instead of pushing through

- Pain that is sharp, radiates down an arm or leg, or wakes you at night.
- A joint that swells after sessions, or an old injury that flares every time you progress.
- You're post-surgery, osteoporotic, or managing a heart condition and want the plan built around it.

That's exactly what our 90-minute evaluation is for: a root-cause diagnosis and a plan built for your body, one-on-one with a doctor of physical therapy.

This guide is general education, not individual medical advice. If you have a diagnosed condition or new pain, get evaluated before starting.

Want the plan built for your body? [Book your evaluation at r1ptp.com/book](https://r1ptp.com/book)

R1 Physical Therapy & Performance · (248) 720-5836 · 1307 E Maple Rd Suite G, Troy, MI 48083